RANGE MANAGEMENT

A strategic plan for the Range Resources Program

British Columbia Forest Service

Province of British Columbia

Ministry of Forests

Deputy minister's message

It is with pleasure that I present the strategic plan for our Range Resources Program.

This plan is the result of a comprehensive review of the Range Program.

The review was conducted by our staff in cooperation with other government agencies and representatives from key client groups.

In the years to come there will be increasing demands on our Crown range resources. Some of them will be inherently compatible. Others can be accommodated through stewardship, integrated management, and planning.

This plan provides the framework for accomplishing this task.

The successful management of range resources requires a clear understanding of:

- our Range Resources Program's management philosophy, goals, and objectives;
- client groups and their needs;
- the key issues affecting range resource management; and,
- the inherent capability of our Crown rangelands to produce a mix of resources to meet public demands.

We must also effectively communicate this program's philosophy to other government agencies, clients, and the public in the interest of promoting sound integrated management and mitigating resource conflict.

Through this strategic plan, we hope to do just that.

We will also use this plan to periodically judge the success of Range Resources Program staff in achieving their management goals and objectives.

Philip Halkett
Deputy Minister

93-00519/

A strategic plan for the Forest Service's Range Resources Program

1.0 Mission statement

Range Resources Program staff champion the stewardship, management, and sustained development of Crown range resources for the benefit and enjoyment of all British Columbians.

2.0 Program priorities and goals

Stewardship

To protect, conserve, and enhance forage and other vegetation, soil, and water on Crown rangelands, thereby promoting a healthy, diverse, and self-sustaining range resource.

Integrated resource management

To ensure the continued health of our range resources for use by livestock, wildlife, and others by carrying out sound resource management practices which successfully integrate the wide variety of uses of our range resources.

Sustainable development

To promote, where appropriate, the increased productivity of forage and other range resources to meet the needs of the ranching industry and other users through prescribed burning, grass seeding, and other planned range enhancement activities.

Tenure administration

To facilitate the commercial use of our Crown forage resource through the administration of grazing and hay-cutting tenures.

Communication and extension

To achieve effective conservation practices by providing information on the management of our range resources to all sections of the Forest Service, clients, government agencies, and other interested parties.

3.0 Management philosophy

Range Program staff are dedicated to practising sound stewardship, integrated management, and the sustainable development of Crown range resources in a manner consistent with the Ministry of Forest's legislative mandate.

As stewards of the province's rangeland resources, the Range Resources Program staff must protect, conserve, and enhance these resources for all British Columbians' benefit. This requires staff to implement and monitor activities, such as noxious weed containment and biocontrol, forage seeding, prescribed burning, and other management prescriptions.

Successful stewardship can only be achieved with effective communication and cooperation. Range Resources Program staff will work in cooperation with other government agencies, clients, and the general public to achieve the stewardship goals of the Range Resources Program.

There are a wide variety of demands placed upon Crown range resources. These demands extend from the need to provide quality forage to the provincial livestock industry, to ensuring the availability of forage and habitat required by wildlife.

It is important to develop management strategies which facilitate the integration of livestock and wildlife use of Crown range.

Strategies are also needed to promote the integration of grazing, silviculture, timber harvesting, recreation, and other resource interests on forested rangelands.

Developing these integrated resource management strategies requires:

- a clear understanding of Range Program goals and objectives;
- an effective integrated resource management planning process;
- a knowledge of the capability of Crown rangelands to produce the desired mix of resources;
- sound communication within the Forest Service as well as with other government agencies and clients; and,
- a willingness by all parties to participate cooperatively in the management of Crown range resources.

The Range Resources Program staff are committed to working cooperatively with government agencies, clients, and other interested parties to foster these essential requirements of integrated range resource management.

4.0 Rangelands and range resources defined

For the purpose of this plan, rangelands are defined as:

Crown lands on which is found vegetation suitable for grazing or browsing by livestock and wildlife.

Rangelands include natural grasslands, savannas, other forests, shrublands, wetmeadows, as well as lands revegetated naturally or artificially to provide a forage cover that is managed like native vegetation.

Range resources are defined as:

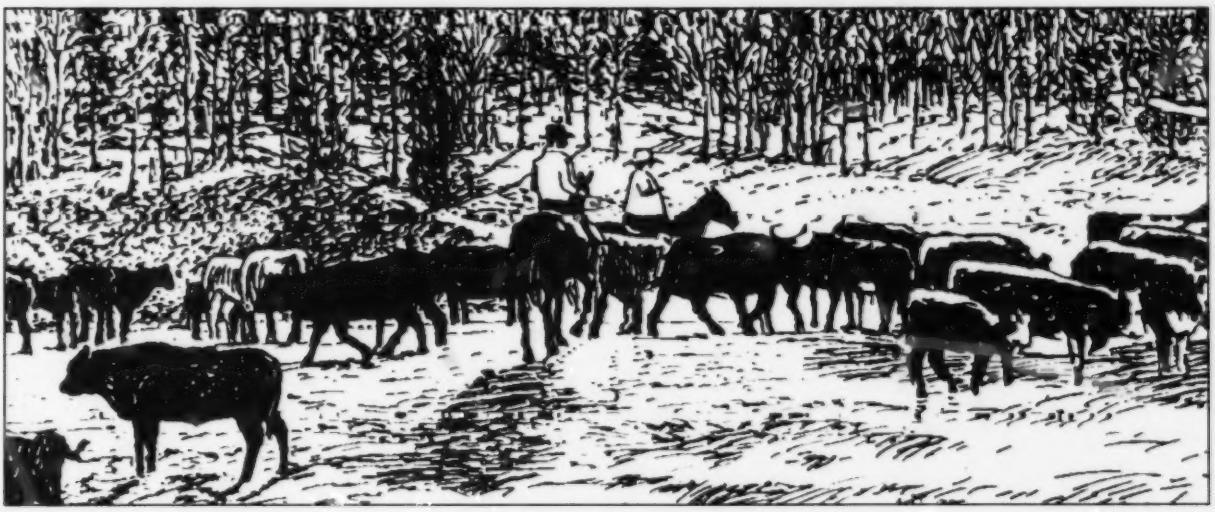
Vegetation including forage used by livestock and wildlife.

5.0 Profile of client groups

B.C.'s rangelands have a wealth of resources which provide economic and recreational opportunities as well as other more intangible benefits to the public. Examples would include benefits derived from the promotion of rural lifestyles and the historical traditions associated with the provincial ranching industry.

The beneficiaries are numerous and include:

- the beef-ranching industry;
- commercial horse operators;
- sheep producers;
- hunters;
- guide/outfitters;
- consumptive and non-consumptive wildlife enthusiasts;
- recreationists;
- timber companies;
- trappers; and,
- aboriginal peoples.



One of the challenges facing Range Resources Program staff is to fairly serve these diverse client groups while protecting our Crown range resources.

An important commercial client group is the ranching industry. It relies on native and seeded Crown forage to build a strong competitive beef industry in B.C.

The Range Program provides for this commercial use through grazing and hay-cutting tenures, undertaking range enhancement projects in cooperation with the industry, and by providing other services.

The Forest Service acknowledges the importance of the province's beef-ranching industry and is committed to fostering its health and economic stability through the sound management of Crown range resources in cooperation with the ranching community.

The Forest Service must also endeavor to provide the range resource requirements of other commercial and non-commercial interests, such as wildlife enthusiasts, guide-outfitters, packers, timber companies, and recreationists.

The Forest Service will ensure fair consideration is given to the needs of all users through the development of integrated resource planning and management strategies to promote communication and cooperation among client groups.

6.0 Key issues affecting the Range Resources Program

Numerous issues affecting the Range Resources Program were identified in the *Range Program Review*, completed in May 1990.

These issues can be divided into two categories: program administration and resource management.

Key program administration issues are listed below.

1. The mandate, goals and objectives of the Range Resources Program have not been clearly defined.
2. Standards for program delivery have not been adequately defined for the district, regional, and headquarters levels of the Range Resources Program.
3. Existing legislation requires updating to meet management needs.
4. Inconsistent program management planning at the district, regional, and headquarters levels of the Range Program has constrained effective program implementation.
5. There has been no consistent evaluation process to assess the overall effectiveness of Range Program delivery.
6. No training system exists to upgrade staff's professional and technical skills and knowledge.

Key resource management issues are listed below.

1. There is no clear, long-term strategy for the conservation, protection, sustained development, and integrated use of Crown rangelands.
2. Range resource and ranching industry issues are not given fair and equitable treatment and consideration in the Forest Service's integrated management planning process.
3. There is a lack of baseline range resource inventory monitoring of forage and other range resources.

4. Forest encroachment and the invasion of noxious weeds into Crown range areas has significantly reduced the quantity and quality of forage available for grazing and browsing.
5. The simultaneous, rapid development of timber, range, and other resource interests in some areas has created difficulties in integrating different resource uses.
6. The removal of timber, which acts as a natural barrier to livestock, has heightened silviculture/grazing conflicts.

7.0 Integrated rangeland management: a vision

In response to the ever-increasing demands placed on B. C.'s Crown range resources, Range Program staff must protect and conserve these resources. At the same time, they must provide for the optimal mix of products and other benefits to be derived from the use of these resources.

This integrated management strategy requires a clear vision of certain essential management functions.

Stewardship

Program staff place a high priority on their stewardship role by protecting, conserving and, where appropriate, enhancing Crown range resources.

This role is achieved by activities devoted to the identification, measurement, assessment, protection, and monitoring of Crown range resources.

Resource planning

Range staff recognize the importance of effective resource planning in the management of Crown range resources.

They acknowledge the need to ensure that the concerns and requirements of all client groups are adequately considered in the preparation of integrated resource management plans at all planning levels within the Forest Service.

Staff will promote a local integrated planning process based on the principles of coordinated resource management planning.

They will also ensure that resource management plans are reviewed on a regular basis to promote the long-term integration of resource uses on Crown range.

Communication

Sound, effective communication between Range Resources Program clients and other government agencies is essential to integrated range resources for the benefit of British Columbians.

Program goals, objectives, and management strategies must be clearly communicated to clients, other government agencies, and the public.

Equally important is communication among clients using Crown range resources and Crown rangelands.

Range staff will improve and maintain strong communications with all affected parties and promote the direct communication between clients.

Sustainable development

Where appropriate, range program staff will implement range enhancement strategies designed to promote the long-term sustained development of range resources to meet user demands.

These strategies will be implemented with careful consideration of the goals, objectives, and resource requirements of our clients.

Resource allocation

The Forest Service has the statutory authority and responsibility to allocate range resources among users.

Program staff will manage Crown range to provide adequate supplies of forage to support and promote a healthy and economically viable provincial beef-ranching industry while addressing the needs of other commercial and non-commercial clients.

Staff will also ensure that a sustained supply of forage and other habitat features, necessary to maintain wildlife populations, will be provided in accordance with approved government land-use directives and integrated resource management plans.

The staff will work cooperatively with the Wildlife Branch of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks and affected clients to establish a mechanism by which Crown forage is allocated between livestock and wildlife.

Administration

The Forest Service, through its Range Resources Program, will facilitate the integrated use of Crown range resources by developing clear, concise legislation, policies and procedures, and by the administration of *Range Act* tenures.

These tenures will be designed to promote the long-term protection, health, and sustained yield of the forage resource essential to livestock and wildlife.

Integrated resource management

The wide variety of demands placed upon Crown range resources requires the staff to work cooperatively with clients and other government agencies to:

- integrate the uses of range resources;
- improve the management of these resources; and,

- optimize the products derived from their use, while minimizing conflict.

Range staff accept the challenge to integrate livestock and wildlife grazing management with those of other users of Crown range resources.

Advisory and advocacy roles

Program staff acknowledge their role as advisors to other Forest Service staff, government agencies, and clients on range management and ecology.

They also acknowledge the support and assistance staff provide ranchers in preparing grazing management plans and in reviewing other resource plans to ensure range concerns are adequately considered in the Forest Service's planning process.

Range Program staff will continue to provide this important advice and support.

The staff will also ensure the interests and concerns of the beef-ranching industry and other interest groups are understood and given proper consideration by government.

Resource inventory and monitoring

The sound management of Crown rangelands is, in part, based on a knowledge of the capability of the land to provide a sustained yield of the resources required by the public.

The Range Program staff will develop and maintain an inventory of the vegetation, range improvements, and administrative boundaries on Crown rangelands, and evaluate the capability of rangelands to supply the required resources.

They will also monitor the prescriptions used in the management and uses of range resources to determine the cost-effectiveness of the chosen management strategies.

The program will implement the habitat-monitoring guidelines which were developed in cooperation with the Wildlife Management Program of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.

Research

Research is needed to gain a better and more comprehensive understanding of the province's rangelands and how to manage them effectively.

The Forest Service, through its Forest Science Research Branch has established a Range Research Program to address these needs.

Range Resources Program staff will continue to support range research initiatives undertaken by the Forest Science Research Branch, other government agencies, and private-sector interest groups.

Extension

It is important to provide clients with up-to-date information on all aspects of range management. The range program acknowledges this important function and will work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; and, other government agencies to implement a range management extension program.

8.0 Strategic commitments

Based on recommendations made in the *Range Program Review*, the staff have made the following commitments to help achieve a strategy for the integrated management of Crown range.

1. Clarify the program's purpose and direction.
2. Develop clear, concise legislation, policies and procedures to facilitate the cost-effective management and use of Crown rangeland resources.
3. Re-evaluate the program's current organization and, where necessary, endeavor to increase staff

or make other necessary modifications to ensure effective program delivery at all levels.

4. Prepare and maintain program management plans for all responsibility centres within the Range Program.
5. Develop a training program to update the skills and knowledge of professional and technical staff.
6. Develop audit procedures to be used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the program's delivery.
7. Implement management strategies for each Resource Management Area in full support of integrated resource concepts.
8. Implement a local resource planning process based on the principles of coordinated resource management planning.
9. Prepare a comprehensive, unified plan for the containment and biological control of knapweed and other noxious weeds which threaten Crown range
10. Implement the habitat-monitoring guidelines developed cooperatively by the Forest Service and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.
11. Complete the mapping of range administrative boundaries and improvements on Crown rangelands.
12. Develop and maintain an inventory of forage and other range resources required for management and planning purposes.
13. Design procedures for conducting range operational trials.
14. Prepare range resource planning guidelines.
15. Develop and implement a strategy for the conversion of permits to licences.
16. Prepare guidelines for tenure management plans and implement them for all grazing tenures.
17. Develop a cost-sharing policy for funding the implementation of range-enhancement projects.

18. Develop a strategy to mitigate problems which arise when natural barriers used to control livestock distribution are breached during timber harvesting.
19. Develop an inter-agency agreement with the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks on the integrated management of forage resources, wildlife, and livestock on Crown rangelands.
20. Develop in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food an extension strategy to meet the needs of ranchers and other clients.
21. Prepare a new schedule of penalties and procedures appropriate to the types of infractions which occur in the use of Crown range resources.
22. Promote fair and equitable consideration of the range resource in all Forest Service-initiated resource allocations, use, and management plans.
23. Ensure range requirements are presented and incorporated into any Crown land plans prepared by and for government.